



Illinois Department of Transportation

# Diversity Matters!

JANUARY 2012

## IL State Senator & IDOT Work to Improve Bonding and Financing Opportunities for Small Businesses

Illinois State Senator Mattie Hunter and the Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT) are working to improve small contractors' ability to qualify for highway construction projects.

Research has found that small contractors, specifically minority-owned and women-owned construction firms, face major hurdles in their ability to compete for transportation related projects. In fact, many small construction firms have noted difficulty with attaining the bonding and financing necessary to effectively participate in transportation contracts. For example, attaining a surety bond is required for most contracts. A surety bond is a form of insurance or a guarantee for a buying entity such as IDOT who maintains responsibility for the administration of public funds used for procurement purposes. Unfortunately, many small contractors have difficulty accessing adequate capital and may not be bondable.

To address these barriers, Senator Hunter has introduced Senate Bill 2491, which allows IDOT to make low-interest loans available to minority-owned businesses, female-owned businesses, and disadvantaged business enterprises certified by IDOT for participation on department-procured construction and construction-related contracts.

The proposed legislation is not final, but is seen as a way to help maintain a diverse, skilled and effective labor force in the State of Illinois.

## New Diversity Website Gets Positive Response

Since the launch of IDOT's *Diversity Matters!* website in November 2011, the site has attracted a significant amount of traffic. In just about two months, the new diversity website has had 4,439 visits from the public.

As a result of its interactivity and navigation structure, the website has gained recognition and support from IDOT's external audience, including contracting firms.

According to Stanley Hansen, manager at Crawford, Murphy & Tilly, Inc., the new website is

easy to navigate and its clear and concise set-up makes it easier for users to find information. "The performance information provided in the Business & Employment Statistics Center is very interesting and illustrates a clearer picture of IDOT's committed mission to provide opportunities to better reflect the diversity of Illinois," Hansen added. "The diversity website is easy to navigate and the pages listed under the Business Opportunities heading truly give the public the full picture of opportu-

nities available to firms owned by socially and economically disadvantaged individuals," said Geri Boyer, managing partner at Kaskaskia Engineering Group. The internet site was specifically designed to provide small businesses with immediate and direct access to IDOT construction and consultant-related information, and to better inform qualified candidates about employment and contracting opportunities.

For a look at the IDOT *Diversity Matters!* website, visit [www.diversity.dot.illinois.gov](http://www.diversity.dot.illinois.gov).

## Target Market Hearings Gather Public

The Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT) is in the process of assessing testimony gathered from three public hearings held statewide last December.

The public hearings outlined the Target Market Program and a new initiative designed to help Disadvantaged Business Enterprise (DBE) firms obtain bonding or financing necessary

to qualify for project contracts.

Public hearings held in Chicago, Peoria, and East St. Louis gave minority, female and general contractor groups, community organizations and other interested citizens an opportunity to talk about instances of discrimination in contracting with regard to race and national origin.

The hearings were required by Public Act 97-0228. Senator Toi Hutchinson and Representative William Davis were the chief sponsors of the legislation.

IDOT appreciates the public participation and testimony gathered from the public hearings as well as the involvement of members of the Illinois General Assembly.

## Today's Challenge Tomorrow's Reward Conference Scheduled

IDOT's Office of Business & Workforce will soon host its 2012 "Today's Challenge, Tomorrow's Reward DBE Conference," at the Abraham Lincoln Hotel & Conference Center in Springfield, Illinois on February 21-22.

The conference is designed to assist Disadvantaged Business Enterprise (DBE) firms, as well as prime contractors and con-

sultants throughout Illinois, to become more successful in advancing their businesses and building relationships with IDOT. The conference will also provide an educational and networking forum to help firms exhibit their businesses and network with Prime Contractors and Prime Consultants. Additionally, an awards luncheon will be held to recog-

nize firms for their outstanding work and accomplishments in 2011.

For more information, contact Dana Goodrum at 217-785-7527 or simply visit [http://www.dot.il.gov/dobu-ins.html#TCTR\\_2012\\_DBE\\_Conference](http://www.dot.il.gov/dobu-ins.html#TCTR_2012_DBE_Conference).

Questions / Comments: [DOT.Diversity@illinois.gov](mailto:DOT.Diversity@illinois.gov)

## Notice of January Letting

The Illinois Department of Transportation is preparing for the January letting, which is scheduled for January 20, 2012. With 170 construction projects totaling more than \$490 million anticipated for the January letting, the 2012 construction season is shaping up to be a busy one. For more information, visit <http://www.dot.il.gov/desenv/delett.html>.

## IDOT Helps Celebrate Engineering Week at UIC

In February 2012, the Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT) will participate in Engineering Week (E-Week) at the University of Illinois-Chicago (UIC). During E-Week, IDOT civil engineer Steve Mastny, who also serves as the bridge inspection manager for District 1 south area, will give a presentation that will explore unique engineering challenges that occur from natural and man-made disasters. The presentation is set

for February 23 at 11:00 a.m. In addition, an Engineering Career Fair will take place on February 22 at the Student Center East on the 3rd floor at UIC. IDOT was invited to participate by Gerald Smith, Associate Director of Minority Affairs at UIC's Minority Engineering Recruitment and Retention Program (MERRP). MERRP is the UIC College of Engineering commitment to increase the number of underrepresented students earning engineering degrees. IDOT, a member of the MERRP Advisory Board,

has partnered for a number of years with UIC in sharing with engineering students the practical side of Civil Engineering as a profession.

Engineering Week is open exclusively to engineering students, however, space permitting, other students may attend. E-Week activities will run from February 20 through February 24. For more information on E-Week 2012 activities at UIC, email Steven Drake at [eweeekcoordinator.ec.uic@gmail.com](mailto:eweeekcoordinator.ec.uic@gmail.com).

## Upcoming Events

DATE	EVENT	LOCATION	CONTACT
1/24/12	Highway Maintainer Information Session	5680 W. 75th Street Burbank	Ivan Barajas 312-793-0436
1/25/12	Highway Maintainer Information Session	820 S. Damen Avenue Chicago	IDES Burbank Office
1/31/12	Job Fair	225 N. Gougar Road Joliet	Robert Smith 815-740-5100

To view a complete schedule of workshops offered by the Office of Business and Workforce Diversity, please visit <http://www.dot.il.gov/sbe/workshop.html>.

## IDOT Winter Workers on the Job

More than 100 people from all over the state are spending the winter working at the Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT). In January, IDOT hired a total of 110 individuals for non-engineering positions

as a part of the Winter Technical Program. The program is designed to give individuals an opportunity to gain on-the-job training and supplement IDOT staff during the winter months. Information about the Winter Technical

Program was posted in all nine IDOT district's and the agency's Central Office, located in Springfield. The Winter Technical Program ends May 15, 2012.



## Winter Snow and Ice Program

With the winter season in full swing, the Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT) has hired temporary seasonal help, called "snowbirds," to address winter weather conditions. More than 1,150 Monthly Snowbirds and more than 740 Hourly Snowbirds have been hired for the Winter Snow and Ice Program. The two positions are similar but different as Monthly Snowbirds are required to work a full work week plus overtime during snow emergencies. Hourly Snowbirds are called out during snow emergencies only as needed.

In addition, Monthly Snowbirds are covered by collective bargaining agreements and are recalled annually based on seniority. Hourly Snowbirds are not covered by collective bargaining, and are not recalled per se. Vacancies for the two types of highway maintainer positions were posted September 19 through September 30 in all nine IDOT districts and the agency's Central Office, located in Springfield. For future postings and applications, please visit [www.dot.il.gov](http://www.dot.il.gov). The Winter Program will end on April 15, 2012.